



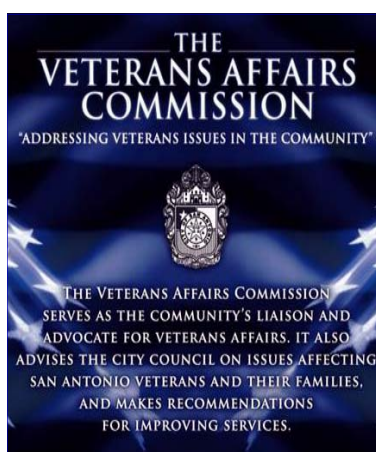
City of San Antonio

Veterans Affairs Commission

Volume V, Issue II

November 2006

Chairman's Message— by Erik Frederick



ERIK FREDERICK, CHAIR
Veterans Affairs Commission (VAC)

Hello fellow veterans. The VAC newsletter provides great information and we encourage you to read and share it with everyone in the veteran community. We've been busy with the dedication of the Veteran's Memorial Plaza Historical District, as well as some new appointments. It is our desire to serve the veterans of San Antonio in as many capacities as our schedules allow.

One of the great benefits of being a veteran is the connection we have with one another. Despite the rivalry between the branches (Go Army, Beat Navy), we all share a common bond through the service we provided to our country. Wherever we may roam, we

can find one another and share our stories.

With that, I'd like to share a story with you. This story is about one of those moments in combat when humor lifted us up and helped us forget about our reality for a few moments.

I was stationed in Somalia from July through December of 2003. We were assisting the U.S. State Department with intelligence collection and camped out at the airport. Our site was located on a sandy hill between the airstrip and the ocean, the view was spectacular and we even saw dolphins swimming by in the mornings. On a regular basis, clansmen would remind us of where we were by lobbing mortars into the airport. When the mortars fell, we would grab our gear and head to the bunkers.

The facilities in our little camp were fairly primitive. We used hanging showers and barrel latrines. We were required to burn the latrine pots to keep them from becoming more of a health hazard than they already were. The drill was to cover the contents with diesel fuel and then top it off with gasoline. The pot would burn and with an occasional stir with a big stick, it would pretty much disappear. Sometimes, a small layer of crust would form at the bottom of the barrel and it was just returned to duty (Cont'd on p. 6).



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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Support Staff

Supporting Our Troops

Designation of the "Veterans Memorial Plaza" Historic District — by Richard Holgin



On April 10, 2006, Councilman Roger Flores, District 1, recommended that City Council consider renaming the existing Auditorium Circle Historic District. The intent was to pay homage to those who have served our country and to identify one central area downtown for all veteran memorials. Various organizations have requested monuments and statues be placed in the downtown area to honor military veterans.

In March, 2006, the Mayor requested that the Veterans Affairs Commission (VAC) provide recommendations for creating a memorial to San Antonio Medal of Honor recipients in the downtown area. There are only three veterans' memorials located within the Auditorium Circle Historic District, the Vietnam War Memorial, the Korean War Memorial and the Municipal Auditorium (dedicated to American soldiers killed in World War One). Therefore, it was appropriate to rename this area the "Veterans Memorial Plaza" Historic District and create a single area downtown for locating future veterans' memorials that can also serve as a tourist attraction.



The Military Affairs Committee met on May 10, 2006, and approved the recommendation to rename the Auditorium Circle Historic District to Veterans Memorial Plaza Historic District. The City Veterans Affairs Commission met on May 15, 2006 and approved a resolution in support of renaming the Auditorium Circle Historic District to Veterans Memorial Plaza Historic District. The Historic Review and Design Commission met on June 7, 2006, and approved a Certificate of Appropriateness in support of renaming the Auditorium Circle Historic District to Veterans Memorial Plaza Historic District.

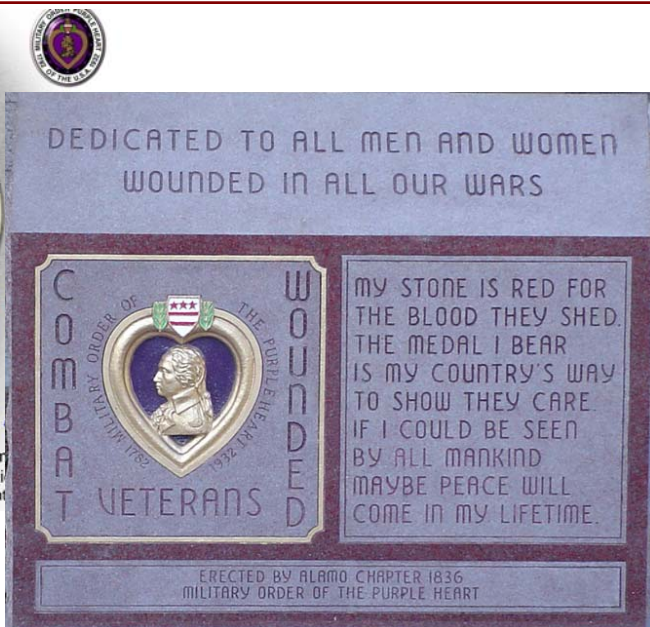
The naming of the Veterans Memorial Plaza was a coordination effort by several city departments, such as the Cultural Affairs, Planning, Park and Recreation, Convention Facilities, District One, and the Mayor's Office.

City staff is working on a Request for Proposals for the design, site development and construction of the Medal of Honor monument. The City of San Antonio allocated \$50,000 towards the project and the Veterans Affairs Commission allocated \$5,000 of their own funds. A fundraiser will be held to offset any remaining costs associated with the project.

The renaming of the Auditorium Circle pays honor to thousands of San Antonio Veterans living and deceased, and will remind citizens and visitors why San Antonio is called "MILITARY CITY USA" 🇺🇸



Purple Heart Monument — by Craig Erickson



On Friday, November 3, 2006, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Alamo Chapter 1836, will dedicate a monument on behalf of all men and women who were wounded or killed in action during all wars and who were awarded the Purple Heart. The monument will be placed on the grounds of the Bexar County Cadena-Reeves Justice Center at the corner of Dolorosa Street and Main Street. The dedication ceremony will be at 10:00 AM with representatives from all five branches of service participating. Bexar County Commissioner Paul Elizondo, a U. S. Marine Corps veteran, will be the guest speaker.

The monument site will also include individual pavers engraved with the names of Purple Heart recipients. Initially 300 pavers will be placed at the site. Additional pavers will be added in the future. Mike Lester, the Purple Heart Steering Committee Chair, and Tony Roman, Military Order of the Purple Heart Chapter 1836 Commander, coordinated with Commissioner Elizondo, Bexar County Infrastructure Services, and the City of San Antonio Economic Development Department to ensure the monument's placement at its location in the heart of San Antonio. In addition, many services were donated from several local companies to construct, transport and place the monument at its site. Without the tireless effort of all these contributors, this monument would not have been possible.

The unveiling of the Purple Heart Monument is the final step of a lengthy process. On August 7, 2006 a groundbreaking ceremony was held at the monument site. In attendance was Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff and the County Commissioners, City of San Antonio Councilman Roger Flores, Congressman Henry Cuellar, and San Antonio Postmaster Robert A. Larios, Sr., who unveiled the newly issued Purple Heart postage stamp at the ceremony.



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Event: Purple Heart Memorial
 Date: November 3, 2006
 Time: 10:00 a.m. to 11 a.m.
 Location: Justice Center (corner of Dolorosa and Main Street)

Event: Celebrate America's Military (CAM) Week 2006
 Date: November 2, 2006 to November 12, 2006
 Time: Various locations throughout San Antonio
 Location: Refer to S.A. Chamber Web site: www.sachamber.org

Meet Our New VAC Members

John R. Dickson



My name is **John R. Dickson** and I am President of Dickson Consulting Group, LLC, a small, service disabled Veteran-owned company that provides air quality consulting services to industrial, manufacturing, and government clients throughout South Texas. We help clients comply with federal and state air quality regulations through careful design and operation of their facilities.

I am a native of San Antonio who grew up on the Southside and graduated from Brackenridge High School. In 1964, I graduated from Texas A&M University with a major in Meteorology and was a Distinguished Military Graduate.

Having served for almost 30 years in the United States Army, my commands encompassed all levels from platoon to brigade throughout the country and around the world. As a Vietnam veteran, I served with an infantry battalion and an aerial reconnaissance support battalion through the Tet Offensive and subsequent campaigns. My last assignment was at Fort Meade Maryland, where I served as a US Army Liaison Officer to the National Security Agency.

Being active in several veterans and military community efforts, including the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Committee, I serve as the Military Liaison Officer to Air Intelligence Agency.

I married my high school sweetheart, Dr. Gogi Dickson, and have three children and four grand children 🍀

My name is **Karen Rea (Ghrist) (Swartzfeger) Bennington**, an only child born to James & Gladys (Hutson) Ghrist and raised in Washington, Pennsylvania, just southwest of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I am a 1965 graduate from Washington Jr-Sr High School and received my basic nursing education at St. Margaret Memorial Hospital School of Nursing in Pittsburgh, graduating in 1968. At that time, I combined married life, with a nursing career, travel, and made time to attend Butler County Community College to amass credits, which were later transferred into a Bachelor of Science in the Nursing Program.

In 1973 I was commissioned as a 1st Lieutenant in the United States Air Force and had assignments at Wright Patterson AFB, Ohio; Flight Nurse School, Brooks Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas; Eglin AFB, Florida; AFIT Assignment to Incarnate Word College where I completed my BSN Degree in 1980; 3511th U.S. Air Force Nurse Recruitment Officer-Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Wilford Hall US Air Force Medical Center, San Antonio, Texas. My 9726 Air Force Specialization Code allowed much of my career to be devoted to treating patients with mental illness and/or drug and alcohol abuse problems. The highlights in my military career were in nurse recruiting, charge nurse and family program coordinator in the Alcohol and Substance Abuse Program at Wilford Hall. As project officer for five Addiction Symposiums, I helped bridge the gap between the military and civilian community by tapping "the best" as guest speakers. One such speaker was Thomas "Hollywood" Henderson, Ex-Dallas Cowboy Linebacker in recovery. After serving 20 years, I retired as a Major and was the recipient of the Meritorious Service Medal with one bronze oak leaf cluster, AF Outstanding Unit Award Ribbon with three bronze leaf clusters, National Defense Service Medal with one bronze star, AF Longevity Service Award Ribbon with four bronze oak leaf clusters, and the AF Training Ribbon.

I am an active participant in many professional nursing organizations and am a life member of the Air Force Association, NAUS, AARP, guest speaker at self-help meetings, Brownie Troop Cookie Chairman, Historian Timber Ridge Neighborhood Association (2004-5), and volunteer in District 6 for Councilwoman Delicia Herrera. My efforts to complete a Dual Masters Degree in Substance Abuse Counseling and Mental Health at St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas, were interrupted so that I could care for my ailing and elderly parents, now deceased. Additionally, I am a Certified Celebrant and continue to pursue becoming a peer assistance advocate for TPAPN. I am honored with this appointment to the City Commission for Veterans Affairs and am most eager to serve the veteran population-our heroes!

I enjoy spending time with my daughter and her three grandchildren, traveling, being a die-hard Pittsburgh Steelers fan, & arts and crafts (Continued on page 6) 🍀

Karen R. Bennington



Why the American Flag is Folded 13 Times— by Richard Holgin



Have you ever noticed on TV or at military funerals, the honor guard pays meticulous attention to correctly folding the American flag 13 times?

The 21 gun salute was determined by adding the individual digits of 1776.

When it is lowered or when it is folded and handed to the widow at the burial of a veteran, this is what each means:

The first fold of our flag is a symbol of life.

The second fold is a symbol of our belief in eternal life.

The third fold is made in honor and remembrance of the veterans departing our ranks who gave a portion of their lives for the defense of our country to attain peace throughout the world.

The fourth fold represents our weaker nature, for as American citizens trusting in God, it is to Him we turn to in times of peace as well as in time of war for His divine guidance.

The fifth fold is a tribute to our country, for in the words of Stephen Decatur, "Our Country, in dealing with other countries, may she al-

ways be right; but it is still our country, right or wrong."

The sixth fold is for where our hearts lie. It is with our heart that we pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of American, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all.

The seventh fold is a tribute to our Armed Forces, for it is through the Armed Forces that we protect our country and our flag against all her enemies, whether they be found within or without the boundaries of our republic.

The eighth fold is a tribute to the one who entered into the valley of the shadow of death that we might see the light of day, and to honor mother, for whom it flies on Mother's Day.

The ninth fold is a tribute to womanhood; for it has been through their faith, their love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great has been molded.

The tenth fold is a tribute to the father, for he, too, has given his sons and daughters for the defense of our country since they were first born.

The eleventh fold, in the eyes of a Hebrew citizen, represents the lower portion of the seal of King David and King Solomon, and glorifies in their eyes, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The Twelfth fold, in the eyes of a Christian citizen, represents an emblem of eternity and glorifies, in their eyes, God the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit.

When the flag is completely folded, the stars are uppermost reminding us of our nation's motto, "In God We Trust".

After the flag is completely folded and tucked in, it takes on the appearance of a cocked hat, ever reminding us of the soldiers who served under General George Washington and the sailors and marines who served under Captain John Paul Jones! They were followed by their comrades and shipmates in the Armed Forces of the United States, preserving for us the rights, privileges, and freedom we enjoy today. There are some traditions and ways of doing things which have deep meaning



Meet Our New VAC Members

Robert B. Robley



My name is **Robert B. Robley** and I was born on June 21, 1938 in Brooklyn, New York and joined the US Air Force out of high school. I graduated from Michigan State University in 1967 with a degree in Industrial Security Administration. Commissioned in Sept 1967, I served in Vietnam from Dec 69 to Dec 70 and retired from the U S Air Force in Oct 1977. My principle service duties were aircraft maintenance, both as enlisted and as an officer.

Post service, I worked in high-tech, banking, and currently manage commercial real estate in San Antonio. I am married with one grown son and am active in neighborhood affairs and local politics ●

My name is **John A. Rodriguez** and I represent District 3. I am a Vietnam veteran who served with the Marines and was assigned to MAG-36.

I joined the Marine Corps in April of 63 and was honorably discharged in April of 1967 having served a tour of duty in Vietnam from the summer of '65 to the spring of '66.

With my wife of 35 years (Ms. Nellie), we have two married sons and four grandchildren. I am very proud that I come from a large family of thirteen (13) consisting of eight (8) boys, with three (3) in the Army, two (2) Air Force, (1) Navy and one (1) Marine.

Recently retiring after 21 years of civil service and 23 years in the private sector, I continue being an active member with many veterans and community organizations. I am very grateful to City Councilman Roland Gutierrez for the opportunity to be a member of the Veterans Affairs Commission and represent District 3 ●

John A. Rodriguez



Chairman's Message (Cont'd.) — by Erik Frederick



Erik Frederick

(Cont'd from Page 1) One barrel happened to have a pocket under that crust and slowly built some gas over time. We had set the pot to burn and were all inside working when it decided to explode. The sound was deafening and our first thought was, mortars! About ten troops came running outside with all of our gear, hearts racing and heading for the bunkers. It was the middle of the day and the site we encountered upon exiting the trailer was something to behold. That pot wasn't empty and needless to say, we spent the rest of the afternoon cleaning and laughing.

I hope this story brought you a smile and perhaps reminds you of a funny story from your days in the service. If you would like to share them with us, we would love to print them. If publishable, we'll run it in one of our future newsletters ●

Office of Military Transformation—A Community/Military Partnership— by James Henderson

San Antonio is not a stranger to the negative effects of BRAC. After the 1995 closure of Kelly Air Force Base potentially serious economic distress could have been caused to the community. Fortunately, the City of San Antonio, Bexar County and other local government entities worked together to establish Kelly USA (now the Port of San Antonio) and have turned the former Air Force base into a thriving inland port and aerospace maintenance, repair and overhaul center.

In 2005, a new round of BRAC began and San Antonio was fortunate enough to be on the receiving end of BRAC. After the BRAC actions are completed, the community will realize a net gain of approximately 3,500 jobs. But even though San Antonio is a major metropolitan area, the challenges for our community to effectively address BRAC related growth are still large.

Fort Sam Houston will experience substantial growth as they prepare to accept expanded missions, nearly 11,000 new personnel and nearly 6,000 families. The base will require about \$1.8 billion in new construction and renovation to accommodate the expected growth. Brooke Army Medical Center (BAMC) will merge with elements of Wilford Hall Medical Center (WHMC) to become the San Antonio Military Medical Center (SAMMC). In addition, The Army Contracting Agency and Installation Management Authority will relocate to Fort Sam Houston. The immense growth that will take place at Fort Sam Houston will be particularly challenging because the base is located near downtown San Antonio and surrounded by residential neighborhoods, industrial centers and a major inter-state. There is no room for the base to expand beyond its current border so planned expansion will have to take place on the available land on the base.

BRAC will have significant impact in a number of important areas in the community. The Interstate-35 corridor could face significant congestion as new missions and personnel are located to Fort Sam Houston and new construction begins to enlarge the existing BAMMC facility in order to accommodate the new missions. San Antonio's housing market and access to education could face pressure when approximately 6,000 families move to our community. The transformation of Wilford Hall Medical Center to an outpatient and ambulatory care facility will affect healthcare delivery for the communities 40,000 military retirees, dependents and survivors. Meeting these challenges as well as the potential opportunities, will require partnership and cooperation at all levels of government—city, county, state and federal—as well as with the private sector to ensure the BRAC related actions are addressed in a thoughtful and comprehensive manner to mitigate the impact on the community.

The City of San Antonio has been awarded a two-year grant from the Department of Defense's Office of Economic Adjustment to establish the Office of Military Transformation. Working in partnership with Bexar County, the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce and other private entities, the office will dedicate City staff exclusively to issues related to BRAC and provide an overall coordinating and strategic management role. The office will have two objectives. First, to manage the Military Transformation Task Force—a community consultative body on BRAC actions—and its subcommittees and assist them in achieving their BRAC related goals. Second, to develop a Growth Management Plan based on studies to identify problems and propose strategies and solutions to issues resulting from BRAC, such as road and infrastructure needs, public transportation, commercial revitalization, base re-use, and health care delivery. The new office should be up and running by January 2007, and its first initiative will be a Community Visioning Session scheduled for early February 2007. The one-day community-wide event will afford the public an opportunity to lend their voice to the impact of BRAC on the community, identify the challenges and opportunities associated with BRAC and develop recommendations to address those issues. Those recommendations will serve as the blue-print for the Growth Management Plan.

The challenges facing our community as a result of BRAC are great but so are the opportunities. By working together and becoming true community-military partners, we can successfully meet the demands of BRAC and enhance and strengthen our community, our military and our country.



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***“Addressing Veterans Issues
in the Community”***

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Karen Bennington	District—6
Robert B. Robley	District—7
Manuel S. Perez	District—8
John Richard Dickson	District—9
Stephen Joseph Spear	District—10
Bob Murdock	District—Mayor

Services & Information Web sites for Veterans

Texas Workforce Web Site

- Texas Workforce Commission (includes Governors Job Bank-State of Texas government jobs): www.twc.state.tx.us

Government Job Search Web Sites

(Federal, County, City)

- Veterans information-how to apply for federal jobs: www.opm.gov/veterans/index.htm
- Army Civilian Personnel: www.cpol.army.mil
- City of S.A. Job site: www.sanantonio.gov/humres
- Bexar County Job site: www.co.bexar.tx.us

Nationwide Job Search Web Sites

- Nationwide job search: www.monster.com
- America's Job Bank (AJB): www.ajb.dni.us

Other Job Search Sites

- Texas Employment Network: www.warmsprings.org/WSRC/TEN/index.html
- San Antonio Job Network: www.sajobnet.com
- Southwest Research Institute: www.swri.org
- UT Health Science Center: www.uthscsa.edu
- State of Texas: www.texasonline.com

Veterans' Information Web Sites

- Department of Veterans Affairs: www.va.gov
- Texas Veterans Land Board: www.glo.state.tx.us
- Texas Veterans Commission: www.tvc.state.tx.us
- Disabled American Veterans: www.dav.org

- Veterans of Foreign Wars: www.vfw.org
- The American Legion: www.legion.org
- National Veterans Organization: www.nvo.org
- National Veterans Legal Services Program: www.nvsp.org
- AMVETS: www.amvets.org
- NPRC (request for records): www.archives.gov
- The Retired Enlisted Association: www.trea.org
- Military Officers Association of America: www.moaa.org
- National Center for PTSD: www.ncptsd.org
- National Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve: www.esgr.org
- Gold Star Mothers of America: Guardiog@aol.com (Hilda B. Guardiola)
- Soldier & Family Assistance Center: Judith.markelz@samhouston.army.mil
- Marine for Life—Matt Stuckey, Maj. USMC: www.M4L.USMC.MIL or sanantonio@m41.usmc.mil

Veterans Job Search Web Sites

- A Veterans Employment & Resource Service: www.veteran.net
- Transition Assistance Online: www.taonline.com
- VFW Job Web site: www.vetjobs.com
- DOL Veterans' Reference Program: www.dol.gov